We claim:

1	1. A method for directing the operation of a slot machine, the method comprising
2	the steps of:
3	identifying a plurality of tracked symbols;
4	initializing a plurality of running counts, each running count corresponding
5	to a tracked symbol;
6	generating an outcome represented by a plurality of symbols;
7	determining an occurrence of at least one of the tracked symbols;
8	selecting a running count which corresponds to the occurrence of at least
9	one of the tracked symbols;
10	adjusting the selected running count; and
11	determining a bonus payout based on the selected running count.
1	2. The method of claim 1 in which:
2	the step of adjusting includes one of:
3	adding a predetermined integer value to the selected running count;
4	and
5	subtracting a predetermined integer value from the selected running
6	count.
1	3. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2	identifying an expiration condition representing a number of plays after
3	which an occurrence of at least one of the tracked symbols expires; and
4	determining an expiration of an occurrence of at least one of the tracked
5	symbols based on the expiration condition.
1	4. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2	identifying an expiration condition representing a time after which an
3	occurrence of at least one of the tracked symbols expires; and
4	determining an expiration of an occurrence of at least one of the tracked
5	symbols based on the expiration condition.

1	5. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2	determining a payout based on the outcome;
3	determining whether the payout equals zero; and
4	in which the step of determining an occurrence is performed only if the
5	payout equals zero.
1	6. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2	storing the running counts on a player tracking card, and
3	in which each running count includes status data representing an expiration
4	condition of each occurrence of a tracked symbol.
1	7. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2	storing the running count at a slot server, and
3	in which each running count includes status data representing an expiration
4	criterion of each occurrence of a tracked symbol.
1	8. The method of claim 1 in which
2	determining a bonus payout further comprises:
3	determining the bonus payout based on a number of plays of the slot
4	machine.
1	9. The method of claim 1 in which the step of
2	determining a bonus payout further comprises:
3	determining the bonus payout based on a duration of time
1	10. The method of claim 1 in which each running count represents occurrences of a
2	tracked symbol generated by a second slot machine.

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1	11. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2	receiving a wager; and
3	in which the step of determining a bonus payout further comprises:
4	determining the bonus payout based on a wager amount.
1	12. The method of claim 1 in which each tracked symbol includes:
2	at least one bonus symbol which contributes to the corresponding running
	count;
3 4	at least one offsetting symbol; and
5	in which adjusting the selected running count further comprise:
6	subtracting occurrences of the at least one offsetting symbol.
1	13. The method of claim 1 further comprising:
2	determining a payout, and
3	determining a bonus payout comprises
4	determining a multiplier to be applied to the payout.
1	14. The method of claim 1 in which
2	determining a bonus payout includes
3	determining points for a slot play reward system.
1	15. The method of claim 14 further comprising:
2	determining a payout for expired occurrences of a tracked symbol.
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4	16. The method of claim 1 in which the slot machine comprises a reel slot

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l	17. The method of claim 16 in which the reel slot machine includes
2	a symbol display window and
3	a payout line that is visible within the symbol display window; and
4	in which determining an occurrence comprises:
5	selecting at least one tracked symbol from amongst all symbols
6	displayed in the symbol display window.
1	18. The method of claim 16 in which
2	determining an occurrence includes
3	selecting the at least one tracked symbol from amongst symbols on
4	one specified reel of the reel slot machine.
1	19. A method for directing the operation of a slot machine, the method comprising
2	the steps of:
3	identifying a plurality of tracked symbols;
4	associating a predetermined expiration condition with each occurrence of
5	each tracked symbol after which each occurrence is expired;
6	generating a plurality of running counts, each running count corresponding
7	to a tracked symbol; and
8	identifying a bonus payout based on at least one running count.

1	20. A method comprising:
2	identifying a plurality of tracked symbols, each having associated therewith
3	an expiration condition after which the tracked symbol is expired;
4	generating a running count for each tracked symbol, including
5	adding to the running count for a new occurrences of the tracked
6	symbol and
7	subtracting from the running count for expired occurrences of the
8	tracked symbol, thereby determining an ongoing count of active occurrences of
9	each tracked symbol;
10	identifying a bonus value; and
11	generating a bonus payout when at least one of the running counts exceeds
12	the bonus value.